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Bd. 1873.



Pridgen, '76. volume

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ADDRESS

See 2 volume

TO THE

PEOPLE OF TEXAS,

ON THE

Protection of Slave Property.

BY H. M'BRIDE PRIDGEN.



✓

AUSTIN:

1859.

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1860, Jan. 6.

Gift of

Hon. Chas. Sumner, U. S. S.,

of Boston (Class of 1830.)

Address.

FELLOW-CITIZENS :

You will please view me not as an intruder upon the institutions of my government—not as an impostor upon the well organized Democratic Party of America, but as a Barrister for civil and religious liberties; an advocate for the advancement of civilization and order and acting in the great cause of carrying out the true intent and extending the great basis of the American Confederacy.

I am proud to meet you on the present occasion. It may be said that my claims upon the people are not sufficient to justify me in attempting to arouse the Southern heart, and Americans, generally in behalf of a redress of our grievances. I have been told that should I keep on making speeches in such a case that my reputation might be placed in jeopardy, that my name would be used as a foot ball for the play of the political gamblers of the times.

Sirs, the frothy slimes from the fault finder, and the hisses and sneers from the jealous minded tricksters fall upon my ears like unto the feathers from a Sea Gull, upon an ocean wave.

I feel enthusiastic upon the present occasion ; while I feel under many obligations for the advice of my friends, I beg leave to differ with them, and boldly assert that nothing can be wrought upon my mind to place an embargo upon my tongue save that of death, and an accomplishment of a “redress” of our grievances.

The great fathers of our institutions left and bequeathed unto us, the American citizens, the golden model, the right of each and every citizen to speak when it comes to his time to speak.

And under such privileges when any citizen feels himself aggrieved by hasty and unwarrantable Legislation upon the part of the General Government, also that of Foreign powers

then and in such cases it behoves him, and it is his time to speak.

I say it is time for all Texians to speak: they should be aroused to the duty they owe to their country, the duty they owe themselves, the duty they owe to their God and man.

Appearing before you this evening as the representative of my own interest, the defender of right, the proclaimer and condemner of all wrongs and impositions hurled upon the institutions of my government, I humbly call for the attention of the people, and hope they may weigh in the great balances of justice and right my cause, and beg them to bear with patience and listen to the appeals of an unworthy Texian.

I love life, I love friendship, I love peace and harmony with all nations of the earth, but I love my country's cause.

Ever since we dispensed with our Nationality, the people of Texas have been subject to all the party issues, all the national questions that have agitated the great mind of the American heart.

Such seemed strange indeed to many citizens of the old star government, old pioneers of a South-western clime. They had been engaged for several years, for the protection of their families and property struggling for freedom, for civil and religious liberties.

But allow me to say we have been placed under the guidance and protection of the great shaft of liberty, the most glorious chart ever presented to man, the Constitution of the United States.

And evidently can the world witness that we as Texians, and as American citizens, have spared no pains on our part in standing up side by side with the defenders of man's golden fabric, when any question was presented calculated to cripple the true spirit of its genius.

For the last fifteen years, we have been increasing in our population, our strength, prosperity and reputation at an enormous rate.

Such has been the language of our prominent statesmen for our edification and welfare, that Texas is destined to become the great empire State of the sunny South.

Without casting reflection upon our condition the situation we are placed in, it doth undoubtedly seem to many that we have all that is necessary; that all's well and sets fair for our unlimited progression.

We find the old, the young, the fair, greeting with joy the proud boast of a Texas citizen. A goodly portion of our State seems to be in a prosperous condition.

In many places where the wild savage was allowed to roam and traverse our plains, brandishing the Tomahawk and Scalping knife, gormandizing in human blood, how changed ! what a contrast !

Now we find institutions of learning and religion presenting a great breast of civilization and wealth. No doubt it appears to thousands that we occupy a more enviable position than that of any other State in the Union.

But sirs, notwithstanding we have apparently ample protection for our defence against the common enemy ; notwithstanding we have been relieved of our public embarrassments, our surplus subject to, and is applied to our internal advancements ; which will enhance our value, strengthen the arm of energy and industry, and finally, cast into the channel of progression the great staff of improvement and wealth.

Yes sirs, notwithstanding all this there seems something left yet to be done of great magnitude and importance to the people of much loved Texas.

My allusions are, and my subject is to introduce some plan for the safety of our slave property of Texas, for the protection of Southern interests. Also the wants of an extradition treaty between the United States and that of Mexico for the purpose of reclaiming criminals for capital offences and crimes when demanded.

Taking a retrospective view of what has been done by the General Government for the protection and benefit of the people of those States lying adjacent to those non-slaveholding States of the North, find that the General Government has done all on her part for the security and protection of the slave holder in his property, his individual and sovereign rights. In spite, sirs, of all the perjured hounds of fanaticism in Congress of the United States of America, the great protectorate—the fugitive slave law was passed.

Upon this question we find a great many professed Statesmen of the present day exercising a dereliction of duty they owe to the Constitution, and for the common good of the General Government, exercising a dereliction of duty they owe to man, attempting to rob the dead of the well known cherished laurels, trampling upon the graves of our forefathers—their deeds—their actions.

On the other hand, we find the Constitutional loving Statesmen, both North and South, rallying for man in protecting him in his sovereign and individual rights, endorsing the fundamental principles of the Constitution itself.

With untiring and steadfast zeal they breasted the storm of Abolition intrigue and the filthy slangs of Fanaticisms; stood there, sirs, within the walls of the Capitol of the American Republic like unto model Arches or pillars of American institutions.

Well did they consider the sovereign rights of each and every State in the Union. Well did they consider that each State forms a portion of the compact that holds together the formation of the whole Confederacy, and that no State or States had any power delegated by the General Government to infringe or transgress upon the rights of any sister State in the Union.

Well did they consider that, if protection was not granted to man in protecting him in his property guaranteed to him by the Constitution; laid down by the great fathers of our institutions, promulgated and endorsed by the national conservative Statesmen, a dissolution of the Union would evidently follow. This great Constitutional Party is now in the ascendancy, and in power. And it is to this Constitutional loving, Union saving party and Statesmen that I condescend to make this appeal; make known publicly the grievances, the disadvantages the people of Texas are laboring under.

We have elected the present incumbent, the Executive of the General Government, James Buchanan, with the view of assisting in guarding, and protecting the Constitutional rights of all sections of the compact.

The party that elected him are responsible to Texas, for a redress of our grievances. Now let us see upon what principles we elected him, and the party that elected him advocated and endorsed.

We find him, previous to his election, pleading, time after time, for the Southern cause. He stated, in a speech in 1854 upon the subject of slavery, that "self preservation is the first law of nature." "Surrounded by these circumstances," said Mr. Buchanan, "I took my stand upon this question, from which I have never departed.

"Under the Constitution the Southern States have rights guaranteed to them, and these rights I have determined to maintain, come weal, come woe. The constitutional rights of

the South under the constitutional compact are as much entitled to protection as those of any other portion of the Union."

Let us hold in remembrance those sayings of old Buck, the present President of the United States. He, sirs, was not only in favor of protecting the people in their property from the hellish schemes of abolitionism within the bounds of the United States, but has always urged the necessity as a nation, the great law of self preservation, which is binding upon individuals as well as nations.

Also to refute and put down by power, if necessary, all attempts of foreign powers thwarting upon the institutions and liberties of the American Republic, the poisonous fangs of cruelty, robbery and destruction.

As an evidence, we find him in 1826, when the well known Island of Cuba was threatened by Mexico and Columbia with seizure and abolitionism, hurling his voice against the policy of allowing any nation, except Spain under whose dominion it would remain harmless, to take charge of that Island, that no other nation should invade and revolutionize that section of the earth.

For, said he, before I would see that Island revolutionized by Mexico and Columbia, recalling the dreadful scenes of St. Domingo to our view, which would endanger the tranquility and peace of the Southern States, I would for my own part buckle on my knapsack and march in company with my friend from Massachusetts in defence of the Southern man's cause. And it is to him, and under his administration and to his party that elected him, that you, Texians, should, without delay, appeal for a redress of our grievances. For it is him the Big Captain that bears our flag inscribed thereon, Liberty, Justice, Protection to the oppressed and the aggrieved.

I claim sirs, that Texas people are already in danger under similar grievances.

Was it not understood from the intelligence of the times, that in 1856 and '57, there were great hopes, and thorough, well concocted schemes and plans laid, high handed projects used by other nations across the great waters for the purpose of compelling Mexico to yield up her institutions to the usurpation of foreign powers?

Vessels of war were fitted out, have been plying upon the shores of Mexico, also within gunshot of American Freemen.

Mexico continually at war within her own borders and her own people, rocking to and fro, incapable, apparently, of self government.

Santa Anna is to be placed in power. Bargain and intrigue is no doubt in contemplation between foreign powers, and that self styled Napoleon of the West—the warlike tyrant of Mexico, the black murderer of American sons.

What would all this lead to, so soon as Mexico yields up her provinces to any nation of note, across the mighty deep? And this government under the American Flag, suffer such to take place without resentment; so soon will the American people both North and South, suffer a dart of wretched poison to be thrown into the mighty heart of American institutions.

It is well known, fellow-citizens, that the present compact of American institutions is at the present time working upon the pivots of a diseased dilemma.

Our Northern Brethren have grown wild and mad upon the question of slavery, grappling after and trying to destroy the living vitals of the Constitution—that chart and chain that we held us together ever since the days of Washington.

Now as this fact is presented to the world that the American Union is upon the eve of a dissolution; that the great home for travelers is virtually divided within itself, knowing at the same time the Northern portion of continent is already under the power of the mighty and strong. It would be very dangerous indeed to our liberties, for foreign governments to spread their Monarchical proclivities or forms of government upon another foot of the American continent.

Sirs, the American Statesmen have kept up a zealous and watchful eye upon the movements of the old British Lion, ever since the days of a freeman's declaration. No doubt with great profit in time of annexation of Texas.

And should that mighty animal attempt to, or put his grasping paw upon another foot of the American continent, I, for one, would be willing to kneel down in humble and ardent prayer, and if it should be necessary, the fair daughters of American freemen would send up their supplications and prayers, that the mighty spirit of Washington may re-visit God's earth and utter a call for the American Eagle to unfurl her golden pinions, dart furiously from her place of repose, place her claws about his shaggy main, and jerk him beneath the dignity of all the beasts that roam the plains.

Hence you see the great law of self preservation is striking at our hearts with wonderful and powerful appeals.

Look to your interest before it is too late, and this self-preservation President, and the party that elected him cannot hesitate, and save their own dignity, but grant what is necessary for our protection and our prosperity.

When the people of any State in this Union are not protected as they should be, having reference to foreign aggression, it is their indispensable duty to appeal to the General Government for a redress of grievances, whose duty I hold it is to grant what is necessary for the advancement and protection of all sections of the compact.

And if forsooth the General Government fails to grant protection under the true principles of justice and the constitution, and application has been legally made, then sirs, it behooves such people so aggrieved, and especially Texians, who went into the Union with the sole calculation of receiving protection for our property, our lives, our civil and religious liberties, such people alluded to ask the polite liberty of withdrawing from the Union that the people so aggrieved could adopt their own mode of redress; if it should be necessary to wage war, yes war to the cannon's mouth, upon those that will not succumb and do what is right in acting in obedience to the established laws of the land, and compel by power a redress of our grievances and wrongs.

How, sirs, is Texas presented in this particular. By accident, as it were, we occupy a different position from that of any other State in the Union, lying adjacent to the Government of Mexico, whose people have been and seem yet to remain enemies to our institutions.

It is well known to you all under the existing state of affairs that Texians' lives are in jeopardy every day of their existence; even the mother and suckling infant are subject to the murderous hand of the absconding slave, and probably under the direction of the black white man of the North. Negro insurrections have been attempted time after time, within the borders of your State.

In 1856, in the section of the Colorado settlements, there was a concocted plan which was very remarkable; an attempted negro insurrection on hand; some two months previous to its detection, two or three hundred able-bodied slaves held in secret conclave this murderous plan:

Their aim was Mexico, kill all before them save the young ladies. Great God, what will we come to. When I contemplate the avaricious schemes of Mexico in presenting a new law and constitution too outrageous for Texians to bear, I cannot but help at times of feeling ashamed in claiming myself a Texian, who with many others marched to the battle field under the Star Spangled Banner in 1846, for the security and safety of Texians, for the advancement of the Southern cause.

This new constitution of Mexico points out that the people of the Government shall and will give protection to all slaves that migrate to their country, and will not treat with any nation for their delivery.

Here is a plan laid, a riddle to solve, a lesson for Texians to learn.

We, by annexation, compelled Mexico to acknowledge our independence; they, in turn, presented this new constitution to rob us of our property and apply it to their own use.

So you see that our neighbors, if we may dare to call them such, are doing all they can to injure the Texian's cause; striving to break down our slave institutions by holding the false banner of liberty to our slaves. Yes, as false as hell, itself; consequently they are adding to their slave institutions by enticing and inviting our slaves to migrate to their country where nine-tenths of them become slaves under the peon laws and institutions.

I do not blame the poor man of Mexico, the peon, the slave, the man that is in bondage, for this constitution. They, I presume, had nothing to do with it; and if they did, they are only to be pitied; they have never had a chance to do better; they have been kept in ignorance and in bondage, they have been bound down to one religion.

They have never drank from the mighty ocean of civil and religious liberties; they have been kept as slaves for the wealthy and the learned, the Priesthood.

It is the aristocracy, the rich men of Mexico, the law-maker that I blame, and hold to an account for this imposition.

Texians, consider well, and compare your condition to that of other States in the Union. Yes, Texians, we are not protected as we should be. The present fugitive slave law will not act for Texians. The present fugitive slave law will not act in foreign Governments in obtaining our rights and our property.

My God, for one good shake from the grave of Jackson, and a groan from his mighty heart, to be uttered and heard and echoed through hill and dale in all sections, and where American freemen are allowed to roam, impress and plant into their bosoms and hearts at this time, the policy of taking the responsibility.

In 1853 the Legislature of the State of Texas passed resolutions requesting our Representatives and Senators in Congress to do all in their power to bring about a new treaty, respecting runaway slaves.

Was there anything done, or could there be anything done in this case, or was there anything attempted to be done?—Pierce, in his message, made use of some allusions as though that there should be a new treaty with Mexico, but he said that the affairs of that Government were unstable, and in an unsettled condition; consequently we would have to wait until they got their affairs among themselves, and their quarrels settled. Well, Texans, I think waiting time is nearly at an end.

James Buchanan, I think, is as good a Southern man as Pierce. But he said nothing as I can recollect, about our grievances; probably they have never been placed before him. Well, I hope to be able shortly to warm up the old Col. upon the subject. If you all will sign a petition, I think we can, warm the wax in the ears of a good many now in Congress.

Now before I forget, I have a word or two to say about some of the proceedings of our last Legislature. My allusions are directed to an act passed incurring the reclamation of fugitive slaves beyond the limits of the United States.

While I entertain great confidence in the wisdom of our Texas Statesmen, I conscientiously proclaim that they in attempting to protect us in our slave property of Texas, they, the members of our Legislative body, have made the matter worse.

What is the substance of this act? That any person or persons capturing or causing the capture of any slave or slaves, who may have escaped beyond the limits of the slave territory of the United States, and who shall deliver such slave or slaves to the Sheriff of Travis county, shall be entitled to receive from the Treasury of the State, thirty-three and one-third per cent on the value of such slave or slaves.

Now sirs, I will have it, the Governor himself who signed

the bill, and after re-consideration he is bound to acknowledge he did wrong, they all did wrong—all hands and the cook.

Why, sirs, this is the greatest inducement for rascality I have ever known enacted into a law by any lawmaker whose whole interest was the people's interest; as well as their own individual interest.

It is an inducement for every negro thief in the United States, to come to Texas, yes and roam Texas over from one side to the other, divide off in companies, and parties at one post on the other side in Mexico the other post in Texas, inviting the slave to follow him, and go to the land of promise under the false banner of abolitionism; the other party on the other side of the Rio Grande sitting there capturing and bringing back to get the thirty-three and one-third per cent. one-third of his value.

This is a better speculation than Bank suspensions.

This is not what I wanted. I wanted our State Government to knock at the door of the American Congress, and ask her to compel Mexico to give up our property, even if it should be war to the cannon's mouth; and if the law makers for the General Government would not open the door, then immediately ask a withdrawal, so that we could knock at our own door.

If the General Government refuse our withdrawal, we will knock, regardless of any law or the consequences. Great God, you cannot keep the young Texian back much longer.

I will now call your attention to the wants of an extradition treaty between this government and that of Mexico for the purpose of reclaiming our criminals when demanded.

Behold what a picture with regard to society is presented to view in many portions of our State.

Towns and inland cities that have been settled upwards of a hundred years are continually haunted and visited by high handed and highlanded pirates and robbers, frequently taking the law into their own hands, breaking through the iron bars of our western prisons, turning loose the savage criminal again upon the public.

This has been the case in San Antonio, and other places; and the citizens were compelled to rise in mass, and use arbitrary means as the only alternative for the purpose of giving protection to civilization and order.

Commit crimes this side of the Rio Grande, flee to the other side; there is no law to get them back; commit crimes on the

other side; flee to this side: no law to send them from our midst.

Is it not strange that there is existing a treaty between this Government and that of Great Britain and France, and there is no extradition law between this Government and that of Mexico, when in fact we had that Government under our control in 1847, and could have compelled her to have treated upon what was necessary for Texians' good and for the good of the general government.

Ponder well the reason why you have no way to get your criminals from Mexico. Do they, our lawmakers, consider Mexico should be kept in reserve as an asylum for all the mean drugs of the United States, for all thieves, counterfeiters, highwaymen, robbers, murderers or place of refuge for criminals of the deepest dye?

Sirs, the citizens of DeWitt county have recently been taught a very severe lesson upon this part of our grievance.

You have to mourn the loss of three valiant and worthy young men, William G. York, Thos. Porter, and young Dally. They were murdered and robbed in cold blood while in pursuit of runaway slaves belonging to young Porter's brother.

The relatives of the unfortunate young men learning and gaining information of the criminals' whereabouts, went to the Alcalde on the other side, and demanded the criminals: finding they could not get them, in and through the Alcalde there being no extradition law between the two Governments; consequently they could do nothing more in the matter.

This circumstance seems to pass our worthy Legislative body like unto that of a morning's breeze. The Legislature was not a stranger to the sad occurrence. The case speaks for itself.

Now in conclusion, I point out to you my position. Free Governments being founded upon principles of distrust and jealousy, relative to the resistive power and rights of the sovereign and independent people of any section, constitutes the fundamental principles of Republican Government. The Executive and heads of power are restrained in their actions within certain specified stipulations, implied in sacred compact respecting alike the affection of each and every sovereign community or section. All are to be protected alike in the security of their property as well as all questions pertaining to or connected with the people of the Government.

We have the sovereign and invaluable right to memorialize the American Congress, and ask a redress of our grievances.

Let us examine and see whether or not the constitution and form of government renders it obligatory upon the General Government, to protect and defend us in our private rights not only at home but abroad. When we find property other than slaves protected by the American Flag in ports of Foreign Nations, why then is it that property in African slaves cannot receive the same protection as that in goods and chattels. I am one of those who believe that property is property, and that property in goods or chattels needs no more protection at home or abroad, than property in African slaves, as I have before contended that the Alligator of the one is the Crocodile of the other. If we protect the one, the sovereign rights of the south demand we should protect the other.

I claim to be a States rights man, a Texas rights man, one who is now in favor, and willing to ask through petition forthwith to Congress for a redress of our grievances. And the heads of power are bound by the most solemn and sacred ties to save the dignity and integrity of the nation, and to grant relief to a distressed people.

But should the mighty Congress of the American Republic refuse, or pass our claim unnoticed, then ask to withdraw. Withdraw? yes, withdraw, and revert to the nation before annexation. Let the hue and cry be among the people to arms, ye Texians brave, mount the war horse and off to Mexico again.

Turn loose the Peon institutions, declare and proclaim from every quarter that nothing shall exist as slavery upon the continent of America but that of the African race.

Keep up the storm, conquer or die, and at last plant the old Texians' flag upon the uppermost heights of the Capitol of Mexico.

Let the Lone Star with its five points be exhibited to all around there to rest with her brightening light, for the inspection of Santa Anna and his followers.

The foregoing is a speech delivered in the town of Clinton, Texas, on the 22d day of March, 1858, by H. McBRIDE PRIDGEN, and in compliance with a card of invitation was sent to the State Gazette for publication. There being a heavy charge of public printing on hand, it was proposed by the editor to publish the speech in pamphlet form, and disiribute according to instructions.

THE STATE OF TEXAS,

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives, now in Congress assembled, at Washington, United States of America.

WHEREAS, In the course of human events it becomes necessary for the security, peace, happiness and prosperity of the people of each and every State and Territory within the bounds of the United States of America, under the Constitution and under the principles of justice and right,

AND WHEREAS, when any people of any State or Territory belonging to the United States, feeling themselves aggrieved by hasty and unwarrantable Legislation on the part of the General Government, and by the mischievous designs and avaricious schemes and plans laid by foreign powers to break down the institutions of the United States, or any portion thereof, which would endanger the property, peace and tranquility of any section or sections of people in the Union; then it becomes the indispensable duty of the General Government to protect her citizens in the full enjoyment and security of their property and lives, and their institutions in peace and quietness.

Therefore, We, as obedient and law abiding citizens of the State of Texas, and of the United States of America, do respectfully and prayerfully represent unto your Honorable body, that a new Constitution, framed by the people of the government of Mexico, setting forth that they, the people of that government, will give and grant protection to all slaves that migrate to their country, and will not treat with any nation for their delivery.

That such constitution is intended through spite and avarice, aiming at an indirect robbery of the slave property of Texas.

And by so doing, have already endangered not only the property of Texas, but have caused the lives of our own citizens, even the mother and suckling infant to be placed in jeopardy, causing attempted negro insurrections, also many crimes and

misdemeanors committed by divers of absconding slaves, which are continually attempting and migrating to Mexico.

That by presenting such Constitution, they have placed upon the shoulders of the people of Texas a great grievance, insulting to the institutions and national honor, dignity and interests of the whole confederacy.

We furthermore respectfully represent and show that the people of Texas are in very much need of an extradition law, for the purpose of obtaining and reclaiming criminals for capital offences, &c., when demanded.

And as such, we most sincerely and prayerfully ask of your honorable body, through our Senators and Representatives, a redress of the said grievances forthwith, without delay; and finally, ask of your honorable body to force upon Mexico a treaty for the redemption of fugitive slaves belonging to citizens of Texas or the United States. Also an extradition law between the two governments.

Even if it should be necessary to WAGE WAR to the CANNON'S MOUTH.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.
March 24, A. D. 1858.

The above petition, or memorial, was drawn up by H. McBride Pridgen, and signed by some five hundred Texian subscribers. It was sent to the care and presentation of James Pinckney Henderson, then United States Senator, (a few days previous to his death.)



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